

[Miss Martha Mather]

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Folk Stuff Range Lore

Range-lore

Ruby Mosley

San Angelo, Texas

Page one different versions same story.

RANGE-LORE

Living in Williamson County when Texas was hardly more than a wilderness, Miss Martha Mather recalls some of the excitement of pioneer days:

"My father was a good manager and became very prosperous. He owned and operated a grist mill, flour mill, saw mill, blacksmith shop, post office, and general store in the village in which we lived.

"When the Civil War broke out he went to enlist but government officials realizing that he would be of greater service at home, refused to enlist him in the army.

"In those days Texas was somewhat made up of outlaws, evading punishment in some other state. Their children would say to other children, "What did your father do that he had to come to Texas?" C12 - Texas. 2 Then they would relate criminal stories that had brought their fathers to this state.

"In those days, Indians were still pilfering in the wooded sections of Texas. I remember one particular tragedy that happened to some of our friends in Lampasas County. Marcus

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Skaggs, Benton Skaggs and a friend of theirs put their oxen to the wagon and went to my father's mill to have some corn ground into meal. They were young boys, Marcus was 16, Benton 12, and their friend was about the same age. On their return they were stopped on the way, by some Indians. Having no protection except the forest on each side of the road, they ran into the densest part of the forest. The Indians emptied the meal out of the sacks and killed the oxen but did not follow the boys into the woods. From their hiding place, the boys had watched until the Indians disappeared, then went across the road for a better view. They entered the more thinly wooded section of the forest and were followed by the Indians and that was when the trouble began. The little friend was shot through the temple and Marcus was shot in the hip. It was left to Benton the 12 year old lad to get aid. Night was drawing near, the two boys wounded and the oxen dead, and realizing something must be done he started home. Choosing the nearest route possible, he ran up the river, and came to the dead bodies of two of his neighbors. The Indians had killed them and taken their guns. It was these guns which had been used in wounding the Skaggs boy and his friend. This frightened the boy still more and he ran to the home of one of the dead men. Here he stopped long enough to drink a cup of coffee, but did not tell the woman of her husband being dead. He rushed home as fast as he could and obtained help to go after the wounded boys. Marcus recovered but his little friend died. The day following the tragedy, the bodies of the dead men were carried to their homes for burial.

"Fort Croghan was an Indian trading post; they came to that post from all parts of the wilderness to do their trading and begging. They would venture down to our tents and each day a different Indian did the talking, pretending that the others could not talk. They were very fond of my father, mother, and the baby. They would beg mother to let the baby go riding with them, but were always refused. They would give her anything they possessed, and when she died, at the age of two years, she had collected about two yards of Indian beads. Knowing that mother liked honey they insisted that she must have some of theirs. When she went after it she saw a green bag hanging from a limb of a tree, and as she drew nearer she decided that it must be a swarm of bees, she could see something

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flying around, but to her amazement she found that it was a bag of honey put up in a deer hide and was covered with green flies.

“Father often went hunting with the Indians. He said he wasn't afraid of their scalping him, because he was baldheaded. Father had a grind-stone which caused much excitement among them. They couldnot understand its use. They would watch my father grind his axe, then they would turn the stone with their fingers pressed against it until they would bleed. Sometimes they ground their fingers to the bone, just to see what it was all about.

“Mexicans would often come over and take the Indian squaws into Mexico. Then the Indians would go over and get their wives; some were Indians and some were Mexicans, and this caused a mixture of the two races. There was a big Comanche Chief named Yellow Wolf. They called him that because he was half Mexican. Old Yellow Wolf had a big sore on the side of his stomach and he would say, 'This side no bueno, Mexican—this side mas bueno, Indian.'

“When I was a little girl no woman's dress was complete without hoops, and at the age of eight I decided that I, too, must wear them. My desire became so strong 5 that I consulted mother and she sent me to the store to consult my uncle who was working in the store. I had to beg and cry before he would let me have them. I put them on and went prancing up the street before my little friends. They were much to large and I was teased by the observers, which brought more tears to my eyes. Old Granny, our negro nurse, made them over to fit me and then I strutted some more. But when I decided to sit down the hoops flew up and gave me a lick on the nose that knocked me over. Old Granny came to my rescue, as usual, and taught me how to pull the hoops up in the back before seating myself.

“When I came to San Angelo, school land could be procured by paying a small fee. Guides were located in San Angelo and as new-comers arrived these guides would help them get located for \$100.00. The confusion began when more people came than land was

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available for. In order to get the usual \$100.00 for the location, the guides often located new-comers on another man's property. Of course this caused much trouble and many killings, so I decided to buy my land, and that was just what I did.”